

**DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL**

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## **ABC Awarded Grant to Combat Underage Drinking**

*Grant comes from the California Office of Traffic Safety*

**SACRAMENTO**— The California Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) today announced that it has been awarded a \$500,000 Minor Decoy and Shoulder Tap Grant to combat underage drinking in California.

“Keeping alcohol out of the hands of our youth is a huge priority for the ABC,” said ABC Director Steve Hardy. “Those under 21 suffer a higher rate of drunken driving fatalities than the general adult population”.

The grant was awarded to the ABC by the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). “Eliminating easy access to alcohol can go a long way in keeping young drivers safe,” said Christopher Murphy, Director of the Office of Traffic Safety. “OTS is very pleased to partner with ABC in this important effort.”

The goal of the one year grant is to reduce the availability of alcohol to minors through Minor Decoy and Shoulder Tap operations conducted by ABC Investigators and local law enforcement officers. The funding will be used to pay for the training and staffing of as many as 500 enforcement operations throughout the state.

Minor Decoy operations are compliance checks in which teenagers, under the direct supervision of police officers, attempt to purchase alcohol from retail licensees. Those who sell to the minors face a minimum fine of \$250, and/or 24 to 32 hours of community service for a first violation. In addition, ABC may take administrative action against the alcoholic beverage license, which can result in a fine, suspension of the license, or permanent revocation of the license.

Minor Decoy operations have been conducted by local law enforcement throughout the state since the 1980's. When the program first began, the violation rate of retail establishments selling to minors was as high as 40 to 50 percent. When conducted on a routine basis, the rate has dropped in some cities to as low as 10 percent. In 1994, the California Supreme Court ruled unanimously that the use of underage decoys is a valid tool for law enforcement to ensure that alcoholic beverage licensees are complying with the law.

The Shoulder Tap program targets adults who purchase alcohol for minors on or around licensed businesses. Minor decoys, under the direct supervision of police officers, approach and ask adult patrons of stores, bars or restaurants to buy them alcohol. The minors make clear to the patrons that they are underage and cannot purchase the alcohol themselves. If an adult purchases alcohol for a decoy, the police officers detain and cite the adult for furnishing alcohol to the minor. The penalty for furnishing alcohol to a minor is a minimum \$1,000 fine and 24 hours of community service. Shoulder Tap operations have proven to be an effective deterrent to the furnishing of alcohol to minors.

ABC is a department of the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency, which is under the direction of Secretary Dale E. Bonner, a member of the Governor's Cabinet.